

## Floor Statement on Motion to Instruct Conferees by Rick Larsen

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I met with Corporal Jeremiah Olsen, a soldier from Coupeville, Washington in my district. Corporal Olsen will be awarded the Silver Star Medal tomorrow by President Bush for his heroic actions during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporal Olsen and his fellow servicemen and women fought bravely and represented our country honorably in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and around the world. They deserve our respect and thanks.

For this reason, it is important we pass an extension of the pay increase we authorized earlier this year.

In April, Congress provided temporary increases in Imminent Danger Pay and the Family Separation allowance that will expire on September 30.

In addition, we authorized a monthly increase for the Family Separation allowance that helps military families pay rent, childcare or other expenses while soldiers are away.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, and as a representative of thousands of servicemen and women, it is my view that we need to do everything we can for our troops and their families.

The Senate-passed Defense Authorization bill provides an increase for all of our troops in imminent danger. The bill also increases the Family Separation allowance provisions, and makes these increases permanent. The House-passed bill does not go far enough.

The motion to instruct conferees to accept the Senate provisions is an important step toward providing our troops the compensation they deserve, and provides it to all of our armed forces.

In my view, our women and men in the military are not paid enough as it is. Now that we are asking them to risk their lives away from their families, and asking for their families to suffer while they are away, we should not cut their pay. Corporal Olsen deserves more than that. I urge my colleagues to pass this motion to instruct conferees and make it clear that this Congress supports our women and men in the armed forces and thanks them for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.